

West Franklin Street, 1200 Block
Richmond
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1298

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WEST FRANKLIN STREET, 1200 BLOCK

HABS No. VA-1298

Location: 1200 block of West Franklin Street, between Birch and Lombardy streets,
Richmond, Virginia.

History and Description:

Historically, Monument Avenue was considered an extension of West Franklin Street, Richmond's most fashionable address in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The 1200 block of West Franklin Street west of Birch Street, which terminates at the avenue, is included in the study as a transitional space, lending some perspective on the differences between traditional urban space. Although Monument Avenue was named in Burgwyn's earliest diagram, the name was not made official until 1906, by a resolution of the city council. The 1906 city directory is the first one to include the named avenue in the street index, but notes that it is a "continuation of West Franklin Street from Lombardy through Lee Circle to Allison."

The 1200 block of West Franklin begins at Birch and ends at Stuart Circle, named for the monument to General J. E. B. Stuart at its center. Designed in 1904 by sculptor Frederick Moynihan, the equestrian statue was mounted on a plain granite base. The site at the beginning of Monument Avenue was selected in September 1904, after the design of the sculpture had been chosen.¹ Unveiled in June 1907, the Stuart monument marked the formal entrance to the avenue from the city, introducing Franklin's tree-covered, 80'-wide urbanity to the avenue's bright, broad new open space. Today that function is reversed, as West Franklin east of Stuart Circle is a one-way street, for eastbound traffic. Richmond College owned the land on both sides of the 1200 block prior to its residential development. The college's financial committee authorized the subdivision of the south side of the block into "convenient" 100'-wide residential lots in 1888, at the same time the Allen Addition was being platted, hoping to profit from the West End land boom of that decade. This side of the block is therefore more residential than the north side, which remained the Richmond College campus until the school moved to new quarters in the West End in the early 1910s. These north-side lots were subdivided in the late 1910s but not built upon until the 1920s.

Construction on this block spanned the years 1889 to 1929. As the 1888 Bates & Bolton plat indicates, the college trustees agreed to round off the corner lots at Lombardy Street to conform with the plan of the new avenue and provide a formal public space at its beginning, a concession that enhanced the street's land values along with its character. The formality, visibility and prestige of these corner lots appealed to institutions, as demonstrated by the presence of two churches and a hospital at Stuart Circle. The monumental focus of the circle and the expanse of the avenue beyond encouraged a monumental architectural response. The resulting concentrated urban space, centered upon J. E. B. Stuart's dynamic pose in the middle of the thoroughfare, introduces a new kind of public space.

¹Carden C. McGehee, Jr., "The Planning, Sculpture, and Architecture of Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia," (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1980), 91-96.

This block is exceptional for the mix of building types it presents in a small area. Although the concentration of residences is high (three apartment buildings and seven houses), the addition of two churches, a parish house, and hospital within the block reflect the multiple activities that take place in this neighborhood. The fact that all but one of these buildings was constructed after most of the houses on the avenue's first three blocks were completed suggests that the 1200 block might best be understood as a response to that development. Certainly the stylistic character of this mostly Colonial Revival block has more in common with the avenue than with the concentration of Queen Anne, Italianate, Romanesque, French Renaissance and Georgian Revival town houses in the four blocks of West Franklin to the east, between Birch Street and Monroe Park.

St. James's Protestant Episcopal Church occupies the southwest corner of the block at Birch Street. The church complex was constructed in two phases and involves three buildings. The church itself, at 1201 W. Franklin St., was designed by the architectural firm Noland and Baskervill. Building permits indicate construction between 1911 and 1913 by the local firm Jonathan T. Wilson Company, at an estimated cost of \$93,000; the cornerstone was set in place in 1912. This Neoclassical church was modeled somewhat after architect James Gibbs's St. Martin-in-the-Fields (1721-26) in London. A full two-story portico supported by six columns with composite capitals creates an impressive temple front. Three pairs of double doors are separated by pilasters and crowned with classical entablatures that feature anthemion ornamentation above the center of each entrance. Pilasters enclose the entire triple-door entry. The steeple, soaring 200' into the sky, is an impressive contribution to the monumental vistas along the avenue.

A two-story wing of matching brick was constructed for Sunday School classrooms when the sanctuary was built. In form a Greek cross, it was set back farther from the street than the church and extended to the west. In later years, church officials purchased an existing house next door at 1205 W. Franklin St. to use as office space. This became the parish house and was eventually connected to the church by extending the original wing. The newer portion of the wing not only joined the church and parish house, but also provided additional space for a recreation hall.

The three-story, brick parish house is the oldest surviving building in the survey area. Its Richardsonian Romanesque design features a brownstone water table and foundation, terra cotta ornamentation, limestone lintels and sills, and arched windows. A three-story canted bay with a hipped roof on the east side of the building balances a front porch with pent roof supported by two Tuscan columns. The house was originally freestanding and numbered 1201 W. Franklin. Richmond College trustees sold this 100' x 144' parcel to Robert W. Powers, of Powers, Taylor & Company, wholesale druggists, in 1888 for \$10,000. According to the deed, Powers agreed to erect a private residence costing not less than \$10,000 within two years. The 1889 Baist Atlas of the City of Richmond and Vicinity reveals that Powers fulfilled his obligation in timely fashion, with a town house according to the current Queen Anne/Romanesque fashion, probably designed by Richmond architect Marion Dimmock.² The Powers family lived here until 1902, when Hugh Campbell purchased it as his family residence for \$25,000. In 1922, James Caskie, on behalf of St.

²Drew Carneal, "A History of the Fan District, Richmond, Virginia," Part Two, p. 42.

James's Church, bought the house from the Campbells for \$38,000.

Of the six other original single-family residences on the south side of this block, only two survive. Architect Marcellus Wright designed the house at **1209 W. Franklin St.** for Dr. W. Lowndes Peple. Completed in January 1913, it is a two-and-a-half-story brick house with a false-mansard tile roof between stepped-parapet endwalls. A wide dormer of four double-hung windows dominates the half-story and appears to rest directly above a heavy cornice at the second-story roofline. The dormer features a centralized pediment above paired windows with brick-formed pilasters defining the fenestration. The residence is one of several two-bay-wide houses on Monument Avenue, and is typical in scale, finish and detailing of side-hall plan Colonial Revival town houses throughout the Fan District and the length of the avenue survey area. The treatment of first-floor elements is elaborate, particularly the classically appointed balustraded porch and unusually fine fanlights over both the entry and front triple window. Windows on the second story have jack-arch lintels.

Stafford H. Parker, assistant cashier at the American National Bank, bought the lot at **1211 W. Franklin St.** from Richmond College in 1912 for \$5,625. He moved his family into their new home in 1914. Like its neighbor, No. 1211 is a two-and-a-half-story Colonial Revival town house, built of red brick with white trim, with a false mansard roof and parapet endwalls. Two gabled dormers with arched windows project from the shingled roof. A three-sided oriel at the second floor dominates the facade. The columned porch has Doric columns and entablature, and the terrace has a balustrade. Windows have limestone jack arches and louvered shutters. A cornice with dentils and modillions occurs at the same height as the one at the house next door, suggesting the kind of unity of design that may have existed on the street before the houses at Nos. 1213 and 1215-17 were razed to make room for the expansion of Stuart Circle Hospital in the late 1950s.

The home at **1213 W. Franklin St.** for Philip A. Fore, vice president of Commonwealth Lumber Corporation, was completed in 1913. A photograph from the 1920s shows a two-and-a-half-story brick town house two bays wide with twin dormers in a tile false-mansard roof. Across the front of the house was a one-story, columned, wood-frame porch topped by a balustrade. The double house at No. 1215-17 is partially obscured in the same photograph, but appears to have been two stories tall with a hipped roof divided by a stepped-parapet firewall. In the black-and-white photo, the house is white, with a pronounced cornice in line with those of its neighbors to the east. This building was first occupied in 1922 (No. 1217) and 1923 (No. 1215).

A massive brick house in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, with broad conical-roofed towers flanking a recessed entry and second-floor balcony, once dominated the southeast quadrant lot at Stuart Circle. Numbered **1219 W. Franklin St.**, the home's first occupants in 1900 were Langbourne M. Williams, vice president of James River Construction Company, and Murray M. McGuire, law partner of John Stewart Bryan. After 1909 it was the residence of George Seay, who became the first governor of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond in 1914. Stuart Court Hospital bought the house in 1958 and tore it down, along with the two neighboring buildings. For more than a decade, from 1900 to 1913, Nos. 1205 and 1219 and the old Richmond College president's house at 501 Stuart Circle were the only houses in this last block of West Franklin Street.

At the southeast corner of the block at Franklin and Lombardy is the only hospital in this study. Stuart Circle Hospital at **413 Stuart Circle** was designed by Richmond architect Charles M. Robinson, who specialized in schools and institutional buildings. Built in 1913-14 at an estimated cost of \$80,000, the hospital was planned as a six-story building with basement. A modern addition that employs like materials and a rusticated base was erected to the north, on the former sites of the houses mentioned above. An elaborate consoled cornice is the main decorative feature on the hospital building, but the upper story was originally graced with a roof garden and pergola. A wrought-iron and glass Art Deco marquee distinguishes the main entry from other secondary entrances.

The oldest part of the hospital occupies two separate parcels of land, sold separately by Richmond College. Dorothy Franklin purchased one lot from the college in 1910 and sold it to T. C. Gordon and his wife, Ruth, two years later. At that time, the Gordons owned adjacent land which they bought from the college in 1911. Just months after the parcels were combined by the Gordon purchases, the land was acquired by Stuart Circle Hospital Corporation on August 5, 1912.³ In the course of its expansions, the hospital, which originally faced west with only a slight curve at its north end acknowledging the shape of its lot, has curved around the entire frontage of the original quadrant and extended into residential lots to the south and east. Further additions and alterations to the building are likely in the future.

Across Franklin Street from Stuart Circle Hospital is St. John's United Church of Christ at **503-507 Lombardy St.** It, unlike the hospital, faces the J. E. B. Stuart Monument directly, while its monolithic mass follows the arc of the quadrant. Prior to World War I, St. John's (then St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church) was located at Eighth and Marshall streets, but ever-expanding city limits promoted a shift in demographics and eventually led to a dispersed congregation. The northeast corner at West Franklin Street and Lombardy was selected as a church site partly because it provided a more convenient location for its congregation.

When the church purchased this parcel from Richmond College in 1913, the old president's house at 501 W. Franklin St. served as the parsonage until it was razed for church expansion. The church was constructed in two planned phases. The parish house, the northern portion of the church, was the first unit completed in 1921. It functioned as a temporary sanctuary and Sunday School until the main sanctuary was completed in 1928. Carl Lindner, a church member, was among the architects who submitted drawings to the church's building committee. His plans for a Gothic-inspired church were adopted. An arched window of intricate stained glass outlined by limestone tracery highlights the main entrance of the sanctuary. A large center door flanked by two subordinate entries expresses the central-aisle configuration of the nave. A three-story bell tower at the west side of the church rises just behind an arcaded cloister-like passage that links the sanctuary to the parish house.

³According to Virginius Dabney's Richmond: The Story of a City (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 281, Richmond Academy, a school for boys, was founded by authorities of Richmond College in 1902 at the site of Stuart Circle Hospital. Dabney claims the school operated at this location for fourteen years, although it did not go out of existence until 1918. The academy must have been housed in one of the three buildings to the east of the hospital that appear on the 1925 Sanborn map since the first section of the hospital was erected 1913-14.

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The oldest portion of the church predates most nearby buildings on the north side of the street; however, the three-story house with two-story appendage next door at **1222 W. Franklin St.** was built about the same time. Dr. Clifton M. Miller, a physician at Stuart Circle Hospital, lived here in 1922, the first year the address is listed in city directories. This three-bay house is highly symmetrical with little irregularity other than the later addition. Brick courses form segmental-arched patterns above second-story windows while creating jack arches above third-floor windows. A cornice at the roofline, a stringcourse separating the second floor from the first, and a full one-story porch supported by four columns introduce horizontal elements.

Next door at **1220 W. Franklin St.** is a two-and-a-half-story residence of two bays. It has shuttered windows, a side-gable roof of asphalt shingles, and a stucco finish. The asymmetrical entrance is sheltered by a columned porch with hipped roof. A front gable interrupts the cornice line of the side-gable roof, adding a vertical emphasis to the facade that is further enhanced by a narrow rectangular window in the upper half-story. Architect Otis K. Asbury designed the house for Mary E. McCarty, who lived here with her husband, salesman P. Armistead McCarty. The building permit was issued in 1923.

Another two-and-a-half-story brick house in the Colonial Revival style at **1218 W. Franklin St.** has symmetrical fenestration emphasized by shutters and a central entrance with pedimented porch. The house's gambrel roof is unusual for the avenue. The 1926 city directory shows that Heath Lorton was the first to occupy this residence.

The house at **1212 W. Franklin St.**, constructed about 1925, has one of the most distinct hip-roofed porches on the whole block. The porch is especially pronounced by the material it shares with the principal roof: green ceramic tile shingles. The porch roof, which is almost pyramidal, is supported by a pair of full Doric columns in front and engaged columns at the rear. The two-and-a-half-story house with a side-hall plan faces the street with a minor front gable. Parapet walls enclose a side-gable roof. A small dormer containing paired windows is topped with a pedimented gable, thus repeating the triangular form used at the porch roof and front gable. In 1922 Broad Street Bank cashier Edward L. Word was the first occupant of this house, designed by P. S. Lubienski of Lubienski Construction Company.

The residence at **1208 W. Franklin St.** was designed as a duplex and built around 1924. The designer and original owner, widow Louise Blows Page, resided downstairs, while the widow of P. B. Augustine lived upstairs at 1208-A. An addition to the duplex was constructed by 1929 and, although vacant its first year, appears in city directories as **Nos. 1210 and 1210-A.**

The buff brick house exhibits some Prairie-style qualities in its massing and form. It is two stories in height, but the low hipped roof, broad front porch, and wide windows with narrow transoms emphasize its horizontal character. The second, joined duplex is more vertical in its presentation and reflects the posture of a row house, although set far back beyond the side garden. The two duplexes, despite their different silhouettes, are united by similar building materials.

A couple of apartments are scattered among the residences on the north side of the block. The Mayflower Apartments, at No. 1206, opened as the Rosa Apartments in 1926 to twenty-five

tenants. The three-story, symmetrical red-brick complex has a flat roof with a front parapet wall. Three bays divide the facade into alternating recessed and projecting planes. A classical entrance is emphasized by its continuity with a window at the second story that is flanked by engaged Ionic columns. The original porch has been removed; surviving details such as multi-light casement windows, the water table, and cornice provide a contrast in color and material to an otherwise simple red-brick apartment house.

Near the middle of the block, on both the north and south sides, are two almost identical apartment houses. Both the Merlin at 1207 W. Franklin St. and the Gill Apartments at 1214-16 W. Franklin St. were built in 1925. Max Ruehrmund is listed on a 1925 building permit as owner, architect, and builder of the Gill Apartments. The estimated cost of construction was \$160,000. Within six months, Ruehrmund sold the lot and building to J. Cloyd Kent, who owned it for ten years. Twenty-four tenants (twenty men and four women) resided at the Gill in 1926, the first year units were leased. The Merlin had nineteen tenants during the same year.

The only differences between the apartments appear to be landscaping and color schemes. The form, plan, elevation and materials--brick, stucco and tile--are the same. Each apartment house is three stories high, symmetrical, and features a central entrance. The facade is organized as five bays flanked by slightly projecting pavilions one bay wide. Each bay in the center region is punctuated by pilasters crowned with modified pointed arches of brick corbelling. Both apartments have a columned entrance with a triangular pediment broken by a segmental arch outlining a fanlight above the front door. A pronounced stringcourse delineates the lower story from the upper floors, in the Renaissance tradition.

Sources of Information:

Richmond City Directories.

Richmond Building Permits: 2434 (1201 West Franklin), 2757 (1209 West Franklin), 14834 (1206 West Franklin), 11759 (1208 West Franklin), 8133 (1212 West Franklin), 14505 (1214-16 West Franklin), 1153 (1220 West Franklin), 7962 (1222 West Franklin), 17066 (503-507 Lombardy), 2880 (413 Stuart Circle).

Deed books: 1205 West Franklin: 135C/326, 170C/384, 175A/519, 282A/163, 282A/169; 1214-16 West Franklin: 253B/513, 297A/462, 314C/322, 316B/253, 324/95, 803/492, 22/9; 1211 West Franklin: 218B/364, 252B/286, 317A/473, 521C/89, 258/1758; Stuart Circle Hospital: 213C/273, 214C/34, 221B/261.

Richard A. Cheek, Through One and One Quarter Centuries: An Historical Booklet Published for the Quasiquicentennial Anniversary of St. John's United Church of Christ, 1843-1968 (Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, Inc., 1968), 12-14.

Margaret T. Peters, ed., Not Hearers Only: A History of St. James's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1835-1985 (Richmond: St. James's Episcopal Church, 1986), 54.

Project Information:

This documentation of Monument Avenue was undertaken in summer 1991 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, Washington, D.C., under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project was sponsored by the Monument Avenue Centennial Committee, Millie Jones and Ceci Amrhein, co-chairpersons, and Sylvia Summers, director of development. Funding was provided by the Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation, the City of Richmond, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, the Historic Richmond Foundation, the F. M. Kirby Foundation, Inc., and the Robert G. Cabell III and Maude Morgan Cabell Foundation.

HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland directed the project and edited this historical report. Kathy Edwards (University of California at Berkeley) was the field supervisor; Esme Howard (Yale University) and Toni Prawl (University of Missouri) were the team historians. Jonathan C. Spodek, AIA, produced architectural drawings and Jack Boucher took the photographs. The team's work resulted in the publication Monument Avenue, of which the report on this one block forms only a small portion. Researchers are referred to that volume for more information.

ADDENDUM TO:
1200 BLOCK WEST FRANKLIN STREET
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Independent City
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